

Congressman Has Previously Helped Obtain Nearly \$17.4 Million for Local Fire Departments & EMS Providers

Washington, DC - As part of his ongoing commitment to ensuring that local firefighters and emergency responders have the tools and resources they need to prevent and fight fires and keep us safe, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today helped the House pass the Fire Grants Authorization Act. The bill authorizes the continuation of the popular and successful Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) program for another five years. It also makes it easier for local fire and EMS departments to take advantage of these programs. Hinchey has previously secured nearly \$17.4 million in federal funding for local fire departments and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) providers through the AFG and SAFER programs.

"These two fire grant programs have helped ensure that fire departments throughout New York and across the country have the equipment and staffing levels needed to protect the public and keep themselves safe," Hinchey said. "Additionally, the federal funds we're authorizing through this bill will help spare local taxpayers from having to pay the bulk of the cost. This is particularly important as local budgets are being cut due to the tough economy."

The bill authorizes \$1 billion per fiscal year from FY 2010 to FY 2014 for the AFG program, which was created in 2000 and provides grants to help fire departments purchase equipment, training, fire trucks and other resources. The SAFER program, which was created in 2004 and has helped fire departments help hire additional firefighters, is authorized under the bill to receive \$1.194 billion per fiscal year during the same time period.

To ensure an equitable distribution of funding through the grant programs, the bill requires the funds to be apportioned such that 25 percent would go to career fire departments, 25 percent would go to volunteer fire departments, and 25 percent would go to combination fire departments. Ten percent would remain for open competition among all types of fire departments. The remaining 15 percent would serve certain other functions, including fire prevention and safety grants as well as grants for non-fire service EMS and rescue operations.

The bill also includes other changes to the AFG and SAFER programs, such as lowering the matching requirement for the AFG program from 20 percent to 10 percent – with populations

serving populations under 20,000 paying only a 5 percent match.

The International Association of Fire Chiefs, the International Association of Fire Fighters, and the National Volunteer Fire Council have all endorsed the bill.